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Louisa Shepard
University of Pennsylvania

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NEW BOLTON CENTER

A KEY PLAYER AT EQUINE EVENTS

BY LOUISA SHEPARD

PENN VET'S NEW BOLTON CENTER IS A VITAL PART OF THE PHILADELPHIA REGION'S EQUINE COMMUNITY. BOTH AS A HOSPITAL AND A COMMUNITY PARTNER, PENN VET ENHANCES LOCAL EQUINE EVENTS THROUGH MEDICAL SERVICES AND VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION.

“The local equine community is extremely important to New Bolton Center,” said Dr. Barbara Dallap Schaer, New Bolton Center’s Medical Director and Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine and Critical Care. “We have historically been involved in a variety of horse shows and events, and we are always looking for ways we can better serve our clients and community.”

For example, Penn Vet staff provides emergency equine transportation to New Bolton Center for horse events including the Radnor Hunt Races, Plantation Field Horse

Trials, and the Winterthur Point-to-Point.

And for years, Penn Vet has played a key role at the Willowdale Steeplechase and the Devon Horse Show, although in different capacities. At Willowdale, New Bolton Center provides volunteers throughout the event: from farrier services, to barn help, to taking tickets at the gate, as well as the equine transportation service. At Devon, New Bolton Center provides 24-hour veterinary coverage throughout the storied 11-day show at the end of May.

“Any time there is any kind of emergency veterinary need, evaluating horses that are sick, injured, anything that comes up, we are here to cover it.”

—Dr. Megan Burke,
Surgery Resident

Surgery Resident Dr. Megan Burke stocks the New Bolton Center Field Service truck, ready ringside at the Devon Horse Show.

ON CALL AT DEVON HORSE SHOW

Dating back to 1896, the Devon Horse Show has a long history of tradition and excellence. Penn Vet has been part of that distinguished history for decades.

New Bolton Center provides a veterinarian around the clock throughout the show, which draws hundreds of competitors from across the nation, and nearly 125,000 spectators. The largest outdoor horse show in the country, Devon has nearly 300 classes in two rings, featuring Hunters, Jumpers, Equitation, American Saddlebreds, Hackney Horses and Ponies, and Driving classes.

“In my mind, New Bolton provides a very calming effect. The vets are ready to deal with anything that might come up,” said Peter Doubleday, Devon co-manager.

“You can’t get any better,” Doubleday added. “We know we can rely on the vets who come here. They are responsible and dedicated.”

Each day, one vet is responsible for a 24-hour shift—stationed on the grounds

during the classes, from about 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., and then on-call overnight, staying in a nearby hotel. A Penn Vet Field Service truck is parked ringside. Devon pays New Bolton Center a daily rate to cover costs, and the clients are charged fee-for-service when consultations are requested.

“Any time there is any kind of emergency veterinary need, evaluating horses that are sick, injured, anything that comes up, we are here to cover it,” said Dr. Megan Burke, a Surgery Resident at New Bolton Center, who has worked the Devon Horse Show for the past four years.

She also enjoys the chance to watch the horses compete. “We usually see them at New Bolton Center when they are lame or not performing well or have an issue,” she said, while watching horses working in the warm-up ring. “It’s great to see some of our patients doing their jobs here at Devon.”

Although rare, the veterinarians sometimes must attend to critical emergencies. At this year’s show, a horse died within minutes of landing on his head and neck after a jump. New Bolton Center’s Dr. Suzanne Stewart ran into the ring to evaluate the horse immediately, but unfortunately there was nothing to be done.

Stewart, board-certified in large animal surgery, was busy the rest of that hot Saturday, checking horses to make sure they were healthy before and after competition. “People were nervous,” she said. “I looked at a lot of horses that day.”

The veterinary duties have evolved over time. Dr. Corinne Sweeney, Associate Dean of New Bolton Center, said years ago she would work at the Devon Horse Show, sitting ringside in the New Bolton Center box to “serve at the pleasure of the judge” in case of a question during a class.

Sweeney, who has been at New Bolton Center for 37 years, attends the show annually, sitting in that same New Bolton Center box.

“With our history and their history, of course we want to be working together!” Sweeney said. “Who in the horse world wouldn’t want to be associated with Devon?”





VOLUNTEERS WEAR MANY HATS AT WILLOWDALE

New Bolton Center is also an integral part of the Willowdale Steeplechase, providing dozens of volunteers to this local event just a couple of miles down the road. Plus, as a beneficiary, New Bolton Center receives a portion of the proceeds each year.

“It’s a wonderful partnership,” said Sweeney. “To me it’s one of the best days of racing, right in our backyard. The event highlights the best racing has to offer: family, fun, and horses.”

W.B. Dixon Stroud, President of Landhope Farms Corp., created the Willowdale Steeplechase—first run in 1993 and held on the second Sunday each May. The unique, broad turf course is carved out of his family’s former 160-acre dairy farm and features a water jump, hedges, post and rail jumps, and a terrific hilltop view. An estimated 14,000 people attended the day-long event this year, a record.

“It’s fun,” said Stroud. “It’s a community event and New Bolton Center is a big part of the community.”

Stroud said he appreciates the New Bolton Center volunteers, who help with everything from working the gate, to the hospitality tent, to the barns, and even down to the horseshoes. “They get the job done and are the best to work with,” he said.

New Bolton Center also provides an equine ambulance in case emergency transport is needed to the hospital. Jimmy

Riggins, the Farm Manager who drives the ambulance, has worked at New Bolton Center for 43 years.

Many other familiar faces are spotted throughout the event. At Gate 4 is Nick Raimato, a mail carrier at New Bolton Center for nearly 30 years, taking tickets and selling programs. At the hospitality tent is Janet Moduszewski, client services at New Bolton, greeting guests. In the barn is Cindy Stafford, administrative assistant in the hospital’s surgery section, directing horse traffic. At New Bolton’s educational booth in the Kid’s Alley is Dr. Nikki Scherrer, Ophthalmology Resident, describing what it is like to be a veterinarian.

Patrick Reilly, Chief of Farrier Services, is also on call on race day—tightening or fixing the occasional loose shoe, or handling other hoof problems. “One of the many things that makes New Bolton Center unique is our location within an equine environment,” Reilly noted. “We are situated in a community that values horses and supports our efforts to help horses.”

Sweeney and her husband, Dr. Raymond Sweeney, Chief of Internal Medicine at New Bolton Center, work crowd control at the Jack Russell Terrier races held before the Steeplechase starts.

“We are so grateful that we are a beneficiary of Willowdale, and that Dixon is so generous in his support of New Bolton Center,” Sweeney said. “It’s extra nice that we are also part of the team providing a great day of racing.”



From top left: Janet Moduszewski, client services at New Bolton, greets guests at the hospitality tent; mail carrier Nick Raimato takes tickets and sells programs; Patrick Reilly, Chief of Farrier Services, and Jimmy Riggins, Farm Manager, are on call for emergencies; Dr. Corinne Sweeney, Associate Dean of New Bolton Center, and Dr. Raymond Sweeney, Chief of Internal Medicine at New Bolton Center, work crowd control.